



Congressman Jim Jordan (R-OH), RSC Chairman
Congressman Connie Mack (R-FL), RSC Repeal Task Force Chairman

Repeal the Waivers of TANF Work Requirements

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Background: The 1996 bipartisan welfare reforms gave States broad flexibility to design welfare programs, with the condition that States must engage welfare recipients in work or specific pro-work activities (including searching for a job) to help low-income families move from welfare to employment. On Thursday, July 12, 2012, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) unilaterally announced that they would disregard current law and allow States to apply for waivers of the work requirements that have been a key to the success of welfare reform.

- **What This Proposal Will Do:** This legislation would prevent HHS from issuing waivers of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work requirements.
- **Why This Is Necessary:** These work requirements are an essential part of the TANF program. They ensure that people receiving welfare assistance are putting themselves on a path toward self-sufficiency, rather than becoming mired in a cycle of government dependency. If this memo were implemented, work requirements would no longer require work. Instead, many new activities not reasonably considered “work” will qualify for welfare payments. Bureaucrats have already tried to [define](#) motivational reading, journaling, and helping with household tasks as “work activities.” If these activities are to be considered “work,” welfare will in effect return to being a no-strings-attached handout and the successful reforms would be undone.
- **Government Gone Wild:** HHS determined that it has the authority to permit States to waive those work requirements, whereas no such authority actually exists. As such, the HHS action both circumvents the law and undermines the intent of Congress, marking just the latest Administration action to this effect. Additionally this change could have an artificial effect on unemployment numbers; some have argued that removing incentives to look for work could drop the number of people who qualify as actively seeking employment, thereby lowering the official “unemployment rate” even if nobody new finds a job.

Conclusion: The Administration should not unilaterally supply waivers to avoid the TANF work requirements, and Congress should repeal the attempt to circumvent the successful bipartisan welfare reforms of 1996.

MEMBER ACTION ITEM: Reps. Camp, Kline, and Jordan have introduced H.R. 6140, the Preserving Work Requirements for Welfare Programs Act. This legislation would prevent the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from avoiding the work requirements in TANF. For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Caitlin Alcala at Caitlin.Alcala@mail.house.gov.

If you would like to participate in the RSC Repeal Task Force, please email Rick.Eberstadt@mail.house.gov.

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